

AFRICAN COLONIZATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

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President of the American Colonization Society,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
COLONIZATION SOCIETY HELD IN THE
MUSIC HALL, BOSTON,

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1853.

"Sir, I believe that Africa will be civilized, and civilized by the descendants of those who were torn from the land. I believe it because I will not think that this great fertile continent is to be forever left waste. I believe it because I see no other agency fully competent to the work. I believe it because I see in this agency a most wonderful adaptation."

EDWARD EVERETT, 18th Jan'y, 1893.

A D D R E S S .

MR. PRESIDENT:

I AM here, at this time, to advocate the cause of African Colonization.

COLONIZATION, using the term in its general sense, has been the means through which the earth, from a single pair, has become filled with its inhabitants. Prosecuted for the purposes of conquest, it made Cortez lord of the valley of Mexico, and placed Pizarro on the throne of the Incas. Resorted to as an alternative to oppression, its power has been demonstrated in the growth of this great Republic. Used for the transfer of a portion of a nation from one part of its territory to another, it finds an illustration at San Francisco, unparalleled in the history of mankind.

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Nor is there in African Colonization anything to distinguish it from the colonizations that have preceded it, except in the circumstance to which it owes its distinctive epithet. It belongs to the class that is influenced rather by repulsion from one land, than by attraction, in the first instance, to another. Its representatives are the Pilgrims of Plymouth, rather than the founders of Vera Cruz.

There are, in the United States, two races, the white and the colored. Brought from Africa, originally, as slaves, the progenitors of the last have transmitted, even to the free of their descendants, the memories and the associations of servitude, which cannot be shaken off while a portion of the same people, still in bondage, suggests, everlastingly, the history and the degradation of the past. Before Emancipation commenced, the relations of the races, as a matter of feeling, were probably of rare discussion. When the first ship-load of slaves was landed, under colonial rule, in the Chesapeake, the wisest of the Virginia "adventurers" never dreamed that a day would come, when the descendants of the captives would be the alumni of colleges, distinguished members of the liberal professions, and filling, because fit to fill, political offices of the highest civilization. Generations were born and died, before such imagin-

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ings were entertained. But, as masters occasionally liberated their slaves, a class of freed-men was created, which, increasing from year to year, gradually attracted public attention; and the far-seeing among the statesmen of the day began to consider the probabilities of the future in regard to it, with an interest to which subsequent events have shown that it was fully entitled.

Amalgamation by intermarriage, as a remedy for the anticipated evils of the increase, was never for a moment thought of; and as the experience of all history had shown that two races, which could not so amalgamate, could exist in the same land in no other relations than those of master and slave, or, where both were nominally free, of the oppressor and the oppressed, the idea of separation naturally became prominent,—a separation so wide as to preclude the fear, or chance even, of any subsequent collision. Hence the plan of colonizing the free people of color of the United States; and hence the selection of the locality,—suggested, doubtless, by the origin of the emigrants,—which has given to this particular colonization its epithet of “African.” Under the influence, at first, of such a repulsion as filled the Mayflower; under the influence, hereafter, of such an attraction as filled the caravels of Cortez; under both

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influences, indeed, now and hereafter, according to the temperament of the individual colonists, this colonization is to go forward unto the accomplishment of the end.

On the 28th of December, 1816, the first meeting to form the present Society was held in Washington. The speakers were Henry Clay, Elias B. Caldwell, John Randolph of Roanoke, and Robert Wright of Maryland. With the exception of a suggestion of Mr. Randolph, that the condition of the slaves would be improved by removing the free colored people, the views expressed were confined exclusively to the best interests of the latter, and the advantages that would result collaterally to Africa from the prosecution of the scheme; and the object of the Society was declared to be, "to promote and execute a plan for colonizing, with their own consent, the free people of color of the United States in Africa, or such other place as Congress might deem most expedient;"—the definition carefully excluding the idea of compulsory action on the part of the Society, as well as the idea of any interference with slavery.

Thirty-seven years have passed since the meeting here referred to. The voices of the speakers can be heard no more. His,—the great orator's, the strong-willed statesman's, which swayed the hearts of men

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to and fro, as doth the wind the yielding corn,—has so recently been hushed, that its echoes hardly yet have ceased to vibrate around us. Thirty-seven years have passed, and the quiet scheme of philanthropy of 1816 has become a great political necessity, still perfect in its plan, still adapted to every emergency, and presenting the only solution to a problem that has, more than once, threatened our existence as an united people.

The importance that in later years has been acquired by colonization, was hardly anticipated when the Society was formed. It is due, almost wholly, to the changes that have since taken place in the relations of the white and the free colored population.

In 1816, the feeling between the two was that of kindness. There was then no difficulty in obtaining employment, to create unfriendly competition. Certain occupations seemed to be conceded by prescription to the colored man. If preferences were given, he obtained them. Associations protecting his freedom existed, even in the slave-holding States. Emancipations were constantly taking place around him. And, if at any time disposed to complain of the inferiority of his social position, he recognized, nevertheless, the force of the circumstances to which it was owing, and left its amelioration to time and events.

The long wars of Europe, just ended, had kept the emigrating classes at home, that they might be used there for manuring old lands with their blood, rather than be sent to people new ones with their enterprise; and, in 1820, the total number of immigrants and their descendants in the United States was but 359,000, and the annual immigration did not exceed 12,000 persons from all countries. Our foreign element, therefore, which has always been the most hostile to the free colored population, was scarcely felt. The condition of things, then, in 1816, was most favorable to the free colored man,—nor, to the mass of the community, was there any probability of a change.

But how great, nevertheless, the change that has, in point of fact, taken place in the interval! All the kindly relations, which so many then supposed would last forever, have been broken up, beyond the power of reparation. Instead of moving along harmoniously in the avenues of labor, the whites and the free colored people now meet there only with ill-feeling and bad blood: and into these avenues, to increase the strife for bread and add to the confusion, there throngs an annual immigration, which, in thirty-three years, has multiplied from twelve thousand to five hundred thousand, making the whole number of immigrants and their descendants, now in our country,

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upwards of five millions of souls. Jealousy and suspicion characterize to-day the relations of the parties. Political influences are beginning to operate. Legislation is invoked; and State after State, slaveholding as well as non-slaveholding, is passing, or threatening to pass, laws hostile to the continued residence amongst us of the free colored population. It is this state of things, no longer the dimly-shadowed possibility, to men of fearful minds, of 1816, but a palpable and ominous fact, that gives to colonization, as the only means yet devised for obviating an impending calamity, the character that is claimed for it, of a great national and political interest.

The causes of the change here described are intimately connected with the proper consideration of the subject: they are manifest, and they are uncontrollable.

The first, strangely enough it may be thought, is the gradual improvement of the free colored people, in education and refinement, which has been going on since 1816, and which, at first sight, would seem to furnish a reason why they should be permitted to remain undisturbed amongst us, with a gradual amelioration of their social position. This, however, is the superficial view of the subject.

The slave is callous, because he is ignorant, or because, without scope for aspiration, contentment

becomes an incident of his condition. But make a freed-man of him; educate him; enable him to see the rewards of ambition, only to discover that they are beyond his reach,—to appreciate social and political rank, only to learn that it is unattainable; and he becomes sensitive and restless, just in proportion as he is capable and enlightened. A strife begins within him, that manifests itself in all his actions. He complains to those who will listen to him. He finds sympathizers, naturally enough, among the whites. He is looked upon as one who has “a cause.” His friends fancy they have “a mission.” Spirit chafes against spirit. Excitement is produced. Organization takes place. The sphere of action dilates. Soon it embraces the question of slavery. The rarely gifted individual, the cause of the particular effervescence, is assumed as a fair representative of the entire race; and a crusade commences, which ultimately involves the whole country, and makes the free colored people the subjects of a family feud, as North and South array themselves in bitter antagonism. Nor is the reference to domestic affairs, thus suggested, inapplicable. On the contrary, as he who is the subject of a household quarrel always finds himself obliged to leave the family, that peace may be restored between its members, so the contest, that has been waging

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among the whites in regard to the free colored people, threatens to end in the abandonment, by the latter, of the scene of the agitation, that, in a distant land, they may find a new home and work out a different destiny. Had they remained as slaves in feeling, had education wrought in them no miracles, had refinement brought no sensitiveness, this state of things would never have existed as one cause of the change in question.

The other of the causes is the foreign immigration. Its effect is two-fold. It operates to increase the irritability on the part of the better classes of the free colored people; and it is felt inconveniently, not only by those of them whose care does not extend beyond to-day, but by those also of the whites who meet the others in active competition for employment; a competition which was far from existing while the foreign immigration remained comparatively inconsiderable. Thanks to the vast country, yet to be filled with population, between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the demand for labor in the West, and the rapidly increasing facilities for transporting it from place to place, this crowding immigration disappears from the seaboard as fast as it arrives, so that the pressure created by it is not intolerable. But still, the immigration is not diminishing. Population is becoming denser and denser every day; and as a cause for the

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change we are accounting for, the increase of foreign labor amongst us must continue to operate unto the end.

That the explanation thus given is the true one, there can be but little doubt. Indeed, none other has been suggested during the angry controversy which for years past has shaken the fabric of our government, rousing all men from their indifference, and obliging them to look the future fully in the face.

The question, then, arises, as to the proper remedy. The answer is plain. Either the white man's prejudices must be overcome, that the colored man's sensitiveness may be conciliated; or the immigration that brings the two races into collision must be stayed; or the weaker must escape from the influences that will make this collision intolerable. The mere statement of these alternatives indicates the inevitable choice.

Twenty years have been consumed by zealous white men, aided by unquestionable instances of high intellectual cultivation and social refinement among the free people of color, in trying to place the latter upon a footing of social equality with the whites; and admitting, though the fact is not stated as of the speaker's knowledge, that, in rare cases and in particular neighborhoods, this may have been accomplished, yet it must be conceded that, as a general thing, the experi-

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ment, undertaken in perfect good faith, and vigorously prosecuted, has been an utter failure. To this point, let the free people of color speak for themselves. At a convention held in Baltimore, as late as 1852, of delegates from various parts of Maryland, and whose proceedings were conducted with propriety and dignity, the following resolutions were passed:—

“Resolved, That while we appreciate and acknowledge the sincerity of the motives and the activity of the zeal of those who, during an agitation of twenty years, have honestly struggled to place us on a footing of social and political equality with the white population of the country, yet we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact, that no advancement has been made towards the result, to us so desirable; but that, on the contrary, our condition as a class is less desirable now than it was twenty years ago.

“Resolved, That, in the face of an immigration from Europe, which is greater each year than it was the year preceding, and during the prevalence of a feeling in regard to us which the very agitation intended for our good, has only served, apparently, to embitter, we cannot promise ourselves that the future will do that which the past has failed to accomplish.”

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Further proof would be surplusage, in regard to this part of the argument.

But, perhaps, the stream of European immigration may be stayed. If it could, it would, at best, but leave things in their present position, sure to grow worse with the natural increase of our existing population. But, who dreams of staying it? It lands, and we lose sight of it. It is the leaven which is absorbed in the loaf it quickens. We are reminded of its presence, only when we hear its axe in the forest; its pick and spade along the great highways its labor builds for us; its shout, as, from the summit of the Rocky Mountains, in its westward progress, it looks down upon the slopes of the Pacific. We could not stay it, if we would. It is part and parcel of the great system, of which the colonization we are discussing is another part. It moves forward in the well-ordered array of events, known by us as Progress. It assumed its place therein at the right time; and to interfere with its operation is as much beyond man's power, as it is for the fly on the wheel of the chariot to check the rapidity of its whirl. This immigration was delayed until a refuge had been prepared for those whose places it was to fill as they disappeared before it; and it is now, only now, when Africa is ready to receive the free colored people of the United

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States, that Ireland and Germany seem disposed to empty themselves upon America.

The first and second of the alternatives suggested, then, being out of the question, there remains the last only to be taken; and separation, or colonization, becomes inevitable.

There are many doubtless, however, who, admitting the force of the argument that has been attempted, look at what has been accomplished in Liberia and the United States since 1816, and then turning to the hundreds of thousands still remaining and still increasing in our midst, regret, in honest despair, the strength of the conclusion which leaves no other resource than one, that, in thirty-seven years, has, they fear, only demonstrated its own incapacity.

But what are the facts in this respect? If the process of transplanting a people from one continent to another, is to be compared to that of transplanting an apple-tree from a hill side to a meadow, then certainly nothing has been done. But, compare colonization with colonization, and it will be found, that more has already been wrought by African Colonization, than has been accomplished by any preceding colonization, in the same time, since the world began. African Colonization is to be, as American Colonization was, the work of generations upon generations :

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and no one is known who complains that the latter was too slow, or who finds fault with its results. Yet, in its commencement, it was a series of misfortunes; while African Colonization has, up to this time, been a series of astonishing successes. War and Famine characterized the early history of the first,—Peace and Plenty the infancy of the last. After a colonial existence of an hundred and fifty years had closed with a seven year's war, the United States obtained their independence as a reward of victory on many a stricken field. At the end of thirty-four years from its first settlement, Liberia received independence and nationality as a free gift due to the ability and worth of the recipients. Comparing, then, the two colonizations by their results, at the end of similar periods, that of Africa is, unquestionably, not the loser. And why should not the results of the future be equally favorable?

Commerce is the great agent upon which all colonization must ultimately depend. How stands it with reference to that which is under consideration? Let us push the comparison we have been making into details.

In the seventeenth century, the commerce of the world was feeble. Now it is in a state of intense activity. Then, the Guede Vrow of Knickerbocker

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was very nearly the model of its ships, to which the laboring winds toiled uselessly to impart velocity. Now, steam drives arrows through the waves. The Mayflower was sixty-five days in coming from England to America. Thirty days is now the average passage of sailing vessels from the Chesapeake to Africa.

Emigration is one of the collaterals of commerce, not its principal object. It reacts to promote its activity, it is true; but commerce, whose great agency is to effect exchanges, furnishes transportation, as a general rule, incidentally only. There was scant occasion for its legitimate functions in the infancy of the Thirteen Colonies. The colonists themselves were the principal consumers of foreign importations. The Indian wanted but little, and, except in furs, had little to give in exchange for what he did want: nor, in truth, had the old world much to spare for him. Manufactures were in their infancy; steam was unborn; and men who tilled their fields with their guns within their grasp, and hurried with them in their hands from the house of God, to use them in self-defence against a relentless enemy, were not such customers as trade was wont to thrive upon, even at the distant day to which we are referring. Very different, indeed, are the present relations of commerce

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with Africa, to what they were in the seventeenth century with America. Instead of a population, scant and sparse, of hunters, having few wants for civilization to supply, the population of Africa is one of teeming millions, athirst for everything that civilization can produce, from the richest fabrics of the loom to the humblest fabrics of the lapstone. If, for upwards of two hundred years, the slave trade has been giving sharpness to the edge of African appetite for guns and powder, rum and tobacco, it has, at the same time, produced commercial relations which will eventually be the all-powerful agents of African Colonization. Throughout all Nigritia,—throughout all Ethiopia,—from the Kong Mountains to the Mediterranean,—from the Kong Mountains to the Cape of Good Hope,—from Cape Verde to Cape Guardafui, there are vast markets, which have become the necessities of manufacturing civilization, whose over-production, in its search for outlets, has given that activity to commerce which is one of the most striking features of the age we live in. These markets are to be reached, that they may be supplied. THIS, THE TASK OF COMMERCE, IS TO BE THE GUARANTY OF COLONIZATION.

Nor is the African himself without his manufactures. He makes, in many places, an iron, which is superior

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to the imported article; out of which he fabricates weapons, and often armor. The chains and rings of gold of the Mandingoes are of rare excellence. In leather, the native is a skillful workman; and his loom, of the simplest fashion, supplies him with a cotton cloth, strong and serviceable, and frequently dyed with a taste that would do credit to an artist's skill. That slaves have been the articles of trade heretofore obtained from him, is a consequence of the white man's teaching. But the time has come for a wiser instruction; and wherever colonization plants a settlement, gold and ivory and rich dye-woods, hides and wax, gums and spices, rice and palm oil, exclude from the market the fellow-beings of the merchant.

While, therefore, in the case of America, colonization was the principal, and commerce the accessory,—in the case of Africa, it is just the reverse; and instead of having a commerce to build up, colonization takes advantage of one that has existed for generations, and is now increasing with a rapidity that is due to the extent of the market to be supplied by it.

But, there is one of the relations between commerce and African Colonization that is peculiar, and the importance of which, in every point of view, can scarcely be over-estimated. The markets extending

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from the Gambia coastwise to the Zaire, and to the interior across the mountains that form the southern boundary of the valley of the Niger, and across the river and the valley to its northern confines, can be reached in no way so well as through the portal of Liberia. The English have in vain tried to penetrate them by expeditions up the Niger, and from their establishments on the coast. But they are beyond the white man's reach, except through the factors supplied by the colored population of the United States. Intelligent, educated, experienced, with peculiar fitness for trade, and exempted, constitutionally, from those diseases of the climate which protect the Liberians from the encroachments of the people they have left, the colonists from this country may, in their especial adaptation to the functions they are called upon to fill, find another reason to acknowledge the hand of Providence in the series of events, which, commencing with the slavery of their ancestors, ends in the return of their descendants to the continent from whence they came, after a probation, which, like that of Israel of old, seems to have been necessary to fit them to become the agents of African Civilization.

AMERICA WAS OPEN TO THE COLONISTS OF THE WORLD. THERE IS BUT ONE PEOPLE THAT CAN COLONIZE WESTERN AFRICA AND LIVE.

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And how compare the motives respectively of American and African Colonization? For this is a feature in the inquiry which should not be lost sight of. Where the Englishman had one motive to leave his home for America, even in the most adverse times, the free colored resident in the United States has many. There was nothing in English law, nothing in English prejudice, to prevent the Carvers, the Robinsons, the Winthrops, and Winslows, from being Lord High Chancellors of the realm. There is nothing now, in law or prejudice, in Great Britain, to prevent the poorest Irishman from aspiring to, and winning, the highest political distinction. But what can the other hope to obtain by remaining in America? An unharmed respectability in insignificance,—protection for such property as an active competition will permit him to acquire,—here and there a right to vote, as an incident to his possessions of land or money,—and even all this enjoyed under a constant apprehension of measures hostile to his peace, comfort and dignity. This is said in no spirit of unkindness. It is said as a prominent truth, due to the fair discussion of the subject. African Colonization is built upon a conviction of the absolute capacity of the colored race, when relieved from the pressure of circumstances, for the highest intellectual development; and the real

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friends of the race ought rather to promote its removal to a home where this development can take place at once, than by retaining it where this is impossible, perpetuate its inferiority. Words of counsel, it is admitted, are of small avail, where the native soil is to be abandoned, and the hearth-stone left desolate ; and yet we would say to the intelligent and educated among the free people of color, that, although in the land they leave, they have wielded no power, built up no monuments, it may be wise to take to heart the story and imitate the example of the Moor, and seek another Grenada, where the Aragonese and the Castilian, who have refused to treat them as equals, can no longer overshadow them with their greatness.

But the counsel thus given, would not now be proper in every instance. Colonization, which has provided a City of Refuge, when circumstances will compel removal, leaves it to every one to determine for himself the day and the hour of his emigration. It is not every one who is fit to be a colonist. Those who are fit, may be detained in this country by paramount considerations of duty. The great mass will remain while they suffer no physical inconvenience. And it is better that it should be so. Many now living may hand down the question of removal to their grand-children and great-grand-children ; and

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even these may hesitate. If it is so, it will be because it is a part of the scheme that it should be so. To the adventurous, the able and the ambitious only, the men who seek to carve their names on the foundation-stones of empires, may emigration be counseled without responsibility. But to all it may be said, AFRICAN COLONIZATION, SOONER OR LATER, IS DESTINY. The call to strike the tent and fill the knapsack will sound in each man's heart;—and when his inward being thrills with it, let him march on his way, and join the army with banners, the cross in the van,—the Exodus of Africa,—that shall then be on its journey eastward across the sea.

The motive to emigrate existing, then, as powerfully as has been suggested, and commerce being relied upon to afford the means of transportation, but one question remains, which is, the efficiency of commerce for the purpose. It has been already stated, that the foreign immigration of 1852 amounted to five hundred thousand; and there is every reason to believe that, during the present year, even this large number will be exceeded. Every one of these immigrants comes at his own cost, or with means remitted by friends who have already established themselves in America; and he comes from a class which is far less able to pay its expenses on the voyage than the corresponding class

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of free colored men in the United States, very few of whom could not collect, among white friends, upon the instant, money to pay their passage; while the Irishman and German have, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, to rely upon themselves exclusively. Now, the entire free colored population of our country is but 428,661,* or less than a year's work for the shipping employed in 1852 in bringing immigrants across the Atlantic. Indeed, had the entire colored population, slave and free, been ready for removal, the 3,633,750 composing it would have afforded less than seven years' work to the same vessels. It is most true that years must elapse before the increase of this population, even, is visibly affected; but the statistics here given show the efficiency of commerce, as the agent that is to produce the result; and the only question left open is the question of time.

The conclusion, then, which, it is thought, may be fairly drawn, is, that the separation of the free colored race from the whites of this country is inevitable, and essential to the happiness of both parties; that it will be brought about gradually, by the operation of causes that cannot be controlled; that it will proceed silently, producing no more sensation than is produced by emigration to California, "oozing," to use the most

* The numbers of the census of 1850 are used here.

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expressive term of the Chinese, when speaking of the disappearance of silver, from amongst us, to be quietly and usefully absorbed in Liberia; involving here no rude partings; leaving no voids, the means of filling which are not at hand; the emigrants, in the end, paying their own expenses, and going forth cheerfully and hopefully, with confident assurance of a happy and honorable home. This will be the glorious fruition of the great plan of African colonization, which will then have fulfilled all the exigencies of a political necessity, under the holy influences of the pure philanthropy and wise forethought in which it originated.

The Society which now has charge of this work, while emigration, in its feebleness, still requires pecuniary aid, will then exist, in all probability, rather to perpetuate its associations, than to facilitate a process which will long since have become independent of assistance. Or, perhaps, its organization, even, having fallen into desuetude, it may occupy no other place than as a portion of that vast temple, whose materials are the good deeds of men. Be this, however, as it may; whether the existence of the American Colonization Society shall then be practical or historical, an empire will acknowledge it as its founder. It will be spoken of in terms of gratitude, as the exterminator of the slave-trade. The missionary to nations whose

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names even have not yet reached the ears of civilization shall fashion uncouth languages to define and describe it. The lessons of the Sunday School, taught beneath the palm trees, which then will cast their shadows on a Christian land, shall make infancy lisp its story. Cities will perpetuate, in their names, the memories of those who have been prominent in its cause; and, from Senegambia to the Niger, the voice of grateful millions shall shout the chorus of its praise.





